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ABSTRACT

Since Title I funds are distributed on the basis of poverty, the key to the fair allocation of such funds is a fair definition of poverty. In this speech, a Congressman describes how his proposed formula for distributing federal funds for educationally deprived children would mean more help for all these children across the country, including whose who live in the nation's cities. The formula would distribute funds on the basis (1) of the number of poor children as defined by the "Orshansky index" of poverty, and (2) two-thirds of the number of children from families receiving Federal Aid to Dependent Children payments and whose income exceeds the Orshansky poverty index. (Author/JF)

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ADDRESS OF JOHN BRADEMAS (D-IND.)
NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS
ATLANTIC CITY, NEW JERSEY
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 1974

I am delighted again to be meeting with members of the American Association of School Administrators, and I am especially pleased to share the platform with my good friend and distinguished colleague, Congressman Al Quie of Minnesota.

And our moderator today is another old friend and one of America's outstanding television news commentators, which makes me realize, Al, that our meeting here today is really just one more edition of Agronsky & Co."!

We meet at an extraordinary time in the life of our country.

Problems of Watergate, energy, inflation -- all these and others -- have combined to diminish the confidence of many Americans in the institutions of our society and, in particular, in the institutions of government.

And we all know that our institutions of education have not been immune from the expressions of apprehension that have become increasingly commonplace in recent months.

Yet I think it also fair to say that, if judged by the continuing and rising demand for opportunities to learn, most Americans are still deeply committed to the proposition that education is essential to their own individual futures and to the future of our country.

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So despite the troubles that have afflicted the entire nation these last months and years and will, without doubt, continue to plague us, I also remain convinced that education of quality and access to it are indispensable to the lives of our citizens and the fabric of our free society.

And, therefore, I believe that what you as leaders of the schools of our land do is crucial, and that's why I am glad to be here today with members of the American Association of School Administrators and to have the opportunity to talk with you about the future Federal interest in education.

Like Al Quie, I speak as a member for many years of that committee of the House of Representatives with primary responsibility for writing legislation to support education, from preschool to graduate school and beyond.

And what I want to do today is talk to you about some aspects of the Federal role of education in the immediate future as well as to take a look a little further down the road.

I shall not here take time to review the entire spectrum of ways in which the Federal government supports education at several different levels.

Rather, I want to say something of the major current legislation in which I know that many of you, as school administrators, will have an interest, the bill to extend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

Then, I want to say something of some other major legislation on which I believe we should soon be acting, such as the education of handicapped children and early childhood development.

And, finally, I want to speak of two developments that I believe to be of particular significance to the future of education in this country, the National Institute of Education and the National Commission on Financing Post Secondary Education.

Let me turn, first, to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act extension, the measure with which Al Quie and I and our colleagues have been wrestling now for many months.

As you know, the full Committee on Education and Labor earlier this month favorably reported this bill, by a vote of 31 to 4, and I am hopeful that the House will vote on it soon and approve it.

For the nation's schools and the children who attend them need the assistance it provides.

First, let me list the principal -- not all -- provisions of H.R. 69 as reported:

1. An extension of the Title I program for three more years with an updating of its formula for distributing its funds and the inclusion of several improvements in its administration.

2. Consolidation of several categorical Federal aid programs into two broad programs.

3. Extension of the impact aid programs for one more year.

4. Extension of the Adult Education Act.

5. The creation of a new Community Education program.

6. An extension of the Education of the Handicapped Act program.

7. An extension of the Bilingual Education Act.

8. A study of the need for early funding of education programs.

9. An authorization for the calling of the White House Conference on Education in 1975.

I want now to talk particularly about the revision of the Title I formula, a revision shaped in large part as a result of the effort of Al Quie and me and others concerned to assure the greatest possible effectiveness and greatest possible fairness in achieving the purposes of Title I, namely, to remind you, to improve the education of educationally deprived children in school districts with concentrations of low-income families.

It is, perhaps, appropriate that Al and I should be meeting with you today because only this morning there became available the text of the report of the Committee on Education and Labor on the Elementary and Secondary Education Amendments of 1974, and therefore, as I speak to you about Title I and other provisions in the bill, I shall from time to time quote directly or paraphrase language from that report in order to be sure to give you the most accurate interpretation I can of what our Committee has done.

As you know, the present law provides that local school districts receive Title I grants based on the number of children in those districts from families with incomes under $2,000 a year, according to the decennial census, and on the number of children from families with incomes over $2,000 from payments under the Federal program of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC).

Each school district's entitlement is computed by multiplying the total number of children from these two categories by one half the state or national average per pupil expenditure for elementary and secondary education, whichever is higher.

When the Title I formula was written in 1965, it was thought that the best method for distributing funds would be to use census data to determine numbers of children from poverty families since that data were thought to be the most nationally uniform and generally reliable.

But since census data are collected only once a decade, there was need for an updating factor to be annually applied to the data, and that updater was written into the original law as the portion of the formula which counts AFDC children.

But over the years, the AFDC children counted under the formula have grown such an extent that they have overwhelemed the children counted from the census.

In Fiscal 1966, 10% of the Title I children were AFDC children. In the present fiscal year, they will total over 60% of the children.

So an imbalance in the way Title I formula distributes funds has resulted from this growth in the number of AFDC children. The reason is that not all states have been able to add more and more AFDC children annually to their total count of Title I children. Studies have shown that the wealthier a state, the more likely it is that its level of AFDC payments will be high and, therefore, that it will be able to add AFDC

children under Title I.

Back in 1970, Title I was amended to avoid this situation by providing that the family income below which children would be counted from the census was to be raised to $3,000 a year and then to $4,000 a year in a graduated fashion, depending on increased appropriations.

But the appropriations for Title I, unfortunately, did not increase sufficiently, and so we have the present situation, still $2,000.

The Committee bill makes a substantial decrease in the number of AFDC children who will be counted for purposes of the formula by adopting a more updated definition of poverty for the census count and by only counting AFDC children above that definition as currently updated. Under the formula in the Committee bill, only 2/3 of the AFDC children above the current definition of poverty will be counted.

So I should try here to make clear that the committee bill would reduce the use of AFDC counts for distributing Title I funds because of what the committee perceived to be the inequitable distribution of funds which has resulted over the last several years.

There was one other reason. The committee believed that the AFDC program in its present state does not provide accurate or reliable figures on poverty throughout the country.

As you all know, there is a great variety in the level of AFDC payments across the country as well as in the methods of administering these programs. These facts mean that AFDC statistics present some difficulties in that the great importance these figures have gained over the years in the Title I formula has led to what some members of our committee felt to be a serious imbalance among the states.

Let me give you an example of what I mean because there has been a good deal, in my view, of distortion and misrepresentation in some public accounts of the purpose of what our committee did in seeking to make more equitable the Title I formula.

New York State, for example, was eligible for almost four times as much Title I assistance during Fiscal 1974 as was Texas (18% for New York as compared to 4½% for Texas).

Yet Texas has only slightly less the total number of school children in the country as New York (5.9% as compared to 7.4%).

A principal reason New York is eligible to receive so much more aid is that it makes higher payments in its AFDC program than Texas and has therefore been able to add during the last eight years 514,000 AFDC children to its total count of Title I eligible children while Texas has only been able to add 91,800.

I am perfectly aware that we are not here discussing a general aid formula but I think it nonetheless true that these figures give you some idea of the distortions created by the present formula.

Then there is another difficulty. The present Title I formula has not only the problems I have just mentioned with respect to the count of children, but the second part of the formula, the payment rate of these children, as I have earlier suggested, has also produced some inequities.

As you know, under present law, school districts are eligible to receive either one half the state or one half the national average expenditure for education for each Title I child, whichever is higher.

Because there is no maximum on the amount which a state can receive, this aspect of the formula has also contributed to a distortion in the distribution of Title I funds among the states.

New York, for instance, is eligible to receive $772 per child while California is eligible to receive only $465 per child.

Yet there would be few who would contend that it costs that much less to live in California than in a similar area in New York.

But the result of this part of the formula is that New York is this year receiving nearly twice as much money as California ($218 million as opposed to $121 million) although the two states have approximately the same number of Title I children.

In light of these considerations, our committee amended the Title I formula to provide what we believe to be a more equitable distribution of funds.

Under the committee amendment, which I offered, with the support of Mr. Quie, each school district will be able to count the number of children within the school district who are from families considered poor according to the decennial census using the official Federal definition of poverty known as the Orshansky Index.

School districts will also be able to add each year 2/3 of those children from families receiving an income from payments under the AFDC program in excess of the current Federal definition of poverty.

To continue, each school district's total number of children is to be multiplied by 40% of the state average per pupil expenditure for education, except that if any state's average expenditure is less than 80% of the national average expenditure, school districts in that state will be entitled to 40% of 80% of the national average per pupil expenditure.

If a state's average per pupil expenditure is in excess of 120% of the national average expenditure, school districts within that state will be entitled to a payment equal to 40% of 120% of the national average per pupil expenditure.

A major reason the committee adopted this new payment rate is that we think it reflects much more accurately the differences in providing compensatory education throughout the country than does the present law. For example, the actual salary cost of providing classroom instruction in New York State in 1972 was $11,830, only slightly over 20% of the national average. But under the present law, New York is getting almost 40% more than the national average per pupil expenditure.

That's why the committee adopted 120% of the national average per pupil expenditure as the maximum payment rate for the Title I program. This maximum will still allow higher spending states, such as New York, to receive an adequate additional compensation for their Title I program but it will not allow that additional payment to get out of hand to the detriment of the other states.

Now I realize that this modification in the payment rate will also mean that the poorest states will be entitled to less

per student than they are now receiving under the present law (one-half the national average).

But the merit in the change of the payment rate is that it will reduce the extremes in payments being made under the present law and will group the states closer to a national average payment per student.

The poorer states will still receive more per student than they are actually spending while the richer states will still receive more than the national average expenditure per student. But the extremes in payments will be eliminated.

The purpose in shifting to an updated definition in poverty for counting children and in diminishing the importance of the AFDC figures is to restore the balance that was present in the original Title I program.

The more accurate and uniform national census data will again be the principal basis for the distribution of Title I money and the rather erratic AFDC data will be used as a less important modifier of that data.

I should say here a word about the definition of poverty to be used in the formula.

In 1973 that definition of poverty was $4,200 for a non-farm family of four and it is arrived at by using the original Orshansky Index of poverty as updated by annual increases in the consumer price index.

The reason the committee adopted the Orshansky Index of poverty for counting the number of Title I children is that it is the most accurate measure of poverty providing data at the county, state and national levels.

Moreover, the Orshansky Index is the measure of poverty adopted by the Federal government in 1969 as the official definition of poverty and it is now widely used in the government.

You will also be interested to know, I am sure, that the Committee included a "hold-harmless" provision, whereby no school district will receive less in any fiscal year than 85% of the money it received in the preceding fiscal year.

I should like now also to say a word about another amendment, which I also offered, which I believe can prove most helpful to Congress and the educational community in our understanding of Title I programs and other similar compensatory education programs.

My amendment would authorize the National Institute of Education to conduct a comprehensive review of compensatory education programs and to study alternative methods for distributing such funds.

In addition, the provision authorizes NIE to conduct experiments for the purpose of evaluating these alternative methods.

One of the real problems our Committee encountered in considering H.R. 69 was the difficulty in obtaining reliable

and useful information about compensatory education programs, especially about their effectiveness and about alternative methods for distributing such money.

The study provided in the Committee bill would call for an examination of all such programs, not only those provided under Title I but state programs as well.

The NIE is directed to study the fundamental purposes of compensatory education programs, evaluate their effectiveness in attaining these purposes and review as well the effect of concentrating such funds in the areas of reading and mathematics.

The amendment also authorizes NIE to look at alternative methods for distributing the monies, including methods based on poverty and methods based on procedures to assess educational disadvantage.

The bill provides a separate authorization of $15 million for the NIE to meet the research costs of the study and to submit an interim report to Congress no later than December 31, 1976, six months before the expiration of Title I, with a final report due no later than nine months thereafter.

I am going to leave to Congressman Quie, who authored the amendment, the task of explaining another provision in the bill which would allow local school districts the option of waiving the poverty requirement of present law regarding the choosing of Title I schools and allowing school districts

instead to choose the schools using other means of determining educational disadvantage.

I want now to refer to another provision of the bill in which some of you will have a particular interest, the so-called consolidation amendment.

The Committee agreed to an amendment which consolidates, under certain conditions, seven categorical programs and two broad purpose programs.

The school library program (Title II of ESEA), the equipment program (Title III, NDEA), and the guidance and counseling program (part of Title III, ESEA are to be consolidated into the first broad category: library and instructional resources.

The innovation program (the remainder of Title III, ESEA), the dropout prevention and the health and nutrition programs (Title VIII of ESEA) and the program of aid to State Departments of Education (Title V of ESEA) are to be consolidated into the second broad category: innovation and support services.

I should here point out, however, that these consolidations will only go into effect if the total appropriations provided for them during the first fiscal year is at least equal to the aggregate amount appropriated for the seven separate programs during the preceding fiscal year. For each year thereafter, the consolidations will

only be carried out if the appropriations for that year are at least equal to the appropriations for the consolidations of the previous fiscal year.

Obviously, the point of this condition is to guarantee that the same total amount of monies is provided for these purposes as were provided in the separate categorical programs. The Committee did not believe that consolidation should be used to retrench the Federal commitment on aid to these several programs.

Let me here, now, say a word about a new title added to the bill, known as the Community Education Development Act of 1974.

The purpose of this new program is to provide some modest Federal assistance to states and local school districts to establish community education programs and to improve existing ones.

By community education program, the Committee means the use of the public school or some other available public building in the community, after regular school hours, to provide a place where all members of the community, from preschool children to senior citizens, can come to learn.

The first year of this new program is to be devoted to planning at both the Federal and state levels, with $1 million authorized for Fiscal 1975 for planning grants to the states.

Beginning with Fiscal Year 1976, $12.5 million is authorized for grants to states for allocation to local school districts for such programs, and $15 million is authorized for the Fiscal Year 1977.

I ought here to point out that Federal aid under this program would be limited to community education programs that provide educational, recreational and cultural activities.

Let me here say as well a word about the Education of the Handicapped Act, which, under another provision of the bill extending ESEA, will be continued for three more years at a total authorization over that time of $616.5 million.

Our Committee felt it essential to make clear our support for the Federal commitment to the education of handicapped children, of which I shall say more in a moment.

Although there are many other items in the bill of which I might speak, I shall take a moment only to add that the Committee also authorized a White House Conference on Education to be held in 1976 for the purpose of stimulating national assessment of the condition and needs of education in this country and to develop

recommendations from such an assessment.

Unlike previous White House Conferences on a variety of national issues, the one to be established under the bill just reported would provide for the appointment of several members of the planning committee by the Speaker of the House and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate as well as by the President. It was the feeling of members of the Committee that the time has come for more meaningful participation by Members of Congress in organizing conferences with such potential significance for public policy.

Now I should like, if I may, to say a word about a couple of other areas in which I have considerable interest and which come within the jurisdiction of the Subcommittee I have the honor to chair.

I said a moment ago that in the ESEA bill just approved, we proposed to extend the Education of the Handicapped Act.

But you and I know that this legislation in and of itself has really not proved adequate to meeting the needs of handicapped children in the United States.

Even with the present pattern of Federal support, only 40 percent of the handicapped children are now being served, and it has become increasingly difficult for the families of handicapped children to meet the exceptionally high cost of special education.

Moreover, as a recent Rand Study showed, Federal programs to assist the handicapped are marked in many cases by a lack of focus and direction.

For these reasons, but in particular because of the concern some of us had to assure that handicapped children are given a more equitable opportunity at an education, Senator Harrison Williams of

this state of New Jersey, the distinguished Chairman of the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, and I have introduced legislation of which I should like to say just a word to you.

It is based in no small part on the needs I have just cited, but also on the pattern of recent State Supreme Court decisions whereby courts have held that handicapped children have a constitutional right to an education just as do normal children.

Our bill would provide Federal funds to states with which to reimburse local school districts for up to 3/4 of the excess costs of educating handicapped over normal children.

We have, as it were, taken into account the finding of many experts that it costs at least twice as much, or more, to educate handicapped as normal children.

I hope that my subcommittee can consider this proposal this year.

Another area of great interest to me and some of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle is that of early childhood development.

Many of you may recall that in 1971 Congress passed the Comprehensive Child Development Bill, which Senator Walter Mondale of Minnesota and I sponsored, which was aimed at making good on the commitment President Nixon once eloquently voiced about the need to make a national commitment to providing healthful and stimulating development to all American children during the first five years of life.

But you will undoubtedly recall, too, that President Nixon vetoed this legislation.

Several members of my subcommittee and I believe that we should again consider legislation to provide the kind of development of which the President spoke. And several of us on both sides of the aisle and in both the House and Senate are continuing our deliberations with an eye toward shaping some proposal which, hopefully, can win both bipartisan support in Congress and the support of the White House.

I should here point out that when we used the phrase, "comprehensive childhood development," we did so advisedly. We wanted to make clear that we had in mind not only the cognitive development of the child, but his emotional, physical and nutritional growth as well.

And we also, I should here make clear, felt then--and I still feel--deeply committed to the proposition that such programs should provide for parental involvement in planning and operating the programs and that such programs should be entirely voluntary.

Another area which is within the jurisdiction of my subcommittee and in which I know a number of you have an interest is educational technology, and I wish that I had time here to go into a discussion of that subject, but I do not.

Rather I would like to conclude these remarks by saying a word about two other developments which I believe are of considerable

significance to the future of education of the United States.

I want first to say something of the National Institue of Education.

This agency, first proposed by President Nixon in 1970 and strongly championed by a coalition of Democrats and Republicans in Congress, is now the major Federal venture for supporting research and development in education at every level and in both formal and nonformal learning situations.

As principal sponsor of the NIE in Congress, I naturally have a deep commitment to seeing it move ahead, to help us improve the quality of learnings and teaching in our schools, colleges and universities and other educational institutions.

And, although I have found it easy to disguise my enthusiasm for the works of Richard Nixon, I have been outspoken in my commendation of the President for having first proposed the National Institute of Education.

For you and I know that we simply do not do as good a job as we ought to do in research on the learning and teaching processes.

The National Institute of Education is aimed at helping make possible, through grants and contracts across the country, not only more and better research but more effective dissemination of the results of the research so that they can make an impact in the classroom.

The NIE has had, for a variety of reasons that I shall not here detail , some difficult times in getting started and Congress has not been all that responsive to its pleas.

I was nonetheless happy to see that President Nixon in his special

message on education to Congress earlier this year indicated his continuing support for the National Institute of Education and I was glad also to see in the President's budget message a call for a $25 million supplemental for Fiscal 1974 and a request for $130 million for Fiscal 1975.

I hope very much that you in the American Association of School Administrators will give your strong support to the President's request in both these instances. I like to think that when you get someone on the White House "Enemies List" urging you to support one of Mr. Nixon's requests, there may be something to be said for it!

The other development of which I want to say a word is the recent report of the National Commission on the Financing of Postsecondary Education.

That Commission was established in 1972 as part of the Education Amendments of that year.

The Commission was authorized in no small measure because of the frustration many of us on the committee who were writing the Higher Education Act felt at our lack of adequate data and of reasoned alternative methods of financing higher education.

We felt that the American university community had really not done a respectable job in respect of what one might call the economics of higher education. So we established the Commission and charged it with the responsibility for looking at the field of financing not only higher education but postsecondary education, in general.

After 14 months of very hard work, the 17 members of the Commission--of whom I was one--completed our report and released it last month.

I should here point out that we did not, as such commissions normally do, submit to the public a laundry list of laws Congress should pass to help postsecondary education.

Rather we proposed an analytical framework, an intellectual construct, if you will, a methodology of enabling college presidents, state legislators, governors, Senators and Congressmen, all those with any responsibility for making decisions about the financing of postseondary education to do so more effectively and more systematically.

For we came to the conclusion that it has become essential that those institutions of our society which both incarnate and advance reason should, with respect to decisions which affect their survival, be more rational.

Both the passage of the NIE and the report of the National Commission on the Financing of Postsecondary Education reflect what I take to be an increasing concern, at least on the part of Members of Congress, that we need to be much more thoughtful and systematic in our efforts to understand the effects on learning and teaching of the actions that we take, in particular, the expenditure of large amounts of public money.

And of course, this same motivation was what propelled me to offer and the committee to accept the amendment authorizing the NIE to conduct a study of compensatory education in the United States.

I think that Al Quie and I can both tell you that one of the reasons that we both, on the committee, had to wrestle so long and hard with the Title I formula -- and of course we are not out of the woods on that one yet! -- is that we simply lack adequate information and analysis, the same kind of problem that troubled us in 1972 as we sought to write a program of general institutional aid for our colleges and universities.

All I have just said has, I like to think, some significance for you as leaders in American education at a variety of levels.

One of the lessons is that all of us who make decisions about education must be more reflective, more systematic, more rational in what we seek to do.

With public monies scarce and the demands for such monies rising both in numbers and in amount, it is essential that all of us who are dedicated to improving the quality of education and widening access to it do the very best job that we can with the resources that are available.

And doing the best job that we can in education means, at least, I respectfully suggest to you, thinking a good deal more about what we are doing and why we are doing it.

Only a few days ago we marked the anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln and I think I can take no better theme for the sermon that I have just preached to you than the simple opening of the House Divided Speech in 1858. Said Lincoln: "If we could first know where we are, and whither we are tending, we could better judge what to do and how to do it."

I hope I have given you some idea of what one Member of Congress thinks about where we are and whither we are tending in the field of American education.

I hope that you as educators will help us as legislators better judge what to do and how to do it.